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Poems

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Poems

Abstract

FROM THE BOOK OF RAIN, FOG (FROM THE BOOK OF RAIN), GUIDEBOOK (after Derek A. Walcott)

Robin S. Ngangom

FROM THE BOOK OF RAIN

Haunting rain visits your hill and fog
weaves damp spider webs on pines.
Our days run out colourless like water
from the cupped hands of frolicking children.

Time departed quickly with you today
with such sweet sorrow behind
the merciless beating of unseen wings
in wet gusts of memory
and reality circles over our heads,
swilling kisses in our own mouths.
And I must get up and go
to walk Sunday's desolate dusk,
dreamer eventually turned realist
on the street.

You are so full of potential happiness
and you unconsciously measure out
fleeting pain. So when you wave one hand
before you turn home again
tell me what emptiness
I should hold in my arms.

Tired of waiting for you
every highway is put to sleep
by midnight rain,
every house has closed its doors
to loneliness.

FOG (FROM THE BOOK OF RAIN)

May's end and all regret.
Lose but your heart and you want it back.
To see the houses, the hills
wear the fog's grey shawl
and none to renew the lease of life,
none to walk together with
after quitting the fretting street
after skirting the cottages peeping
to walk the lanes, to take your time
in the desired drizzle,
the cherished fog.

Thus more than love itself
the thought of loving is better.
Our memories will be kind
and in wind and rain you are never apart
from laughter and from warmth.

To be mapless lovers from ancient pasts
before we ever become real again,
before love becomes sad in give and take
and be ghosts again with fingers of fog.
To see only our spectral selves embrace
and kiss from memory among pines wet with rain,
or, drink warm wines in restaurants haunted
and melt in the fog
to return again.

GUIDEBOOK

(after Derek A. Walcott)

In winter huts huddle
in the cold of feudal territory
and the man of the hills
still sits, toils and dreams
in the uncomprehension of festering progress
of ugly concrete and feverish towns

of these North-eastern colonies.
Tear up your passports
when you come here.

Here natives as grasping as the citizens
of independent India,
girls to be had by the conquistador salesman
we live as a Babel of colourful tribes
selling indigenous culture
in these worlds you discover
in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
and tourist brochures
and when the burrower
from the tough plains
thinks of our gullible hills
he should remember
that we who seem uncouth
will also bite the hand which feeds.